

Special Forest Fire Reprint Issue

Articles and Photographs
Reprinted from May 10, 17,
24, and 31st Issues of the
Crawford Co. Avalanche

Crawford
County

Avalanche

\$1

Fire Destroys At Least 50 Homes

Reprinted from May 10th issue

By Jon Thompson and Irene Pettyjohn

The most expensive forest fire in Crawford County's history burned out of control from 3:58 p.m. Tuesday, May 8, until about 11 p.m. when most of the blaze was contained.

Firefighters estimated more than 50 houses burned to the ground in an area from Thendara Rd. northeast to Stephan Bridge Rd., Shaw Rd., Pine Rd., and North Down River Rd., to Bald Hill Rd. Damages were initially estimated at \$2.4 million by county equalization director Bill Borchers. At 9:55 p.m., Governor Blanchard declared it a disaster area.

DNR firefighter Duane Brooks said the fire produced more monetary loss than the large Mack Lake fire a couple years ago.

"It was the scariest fire I've ever been in," said Beaver Creek Fire Chief Ed Holtcamp. "It was the most houses I've ever seen burn in my 27 years of firefighting."

Strong winds pushed the blaze northeast quickly from Pappy's Trail, where the fire started.

"This was the worst fire I've fought because of the wind," said Howard Taylor, a firefighter with the DNR crew for 15 years.

"In all the 37 years I've been around house fires in Grayling, I saw more houses burn today than all the other years combined," said Sheriff Harold Hatfield.

Only two persons were listed as injured from the fire — two firefighters — as of midnight Tuesday. DNR Conservation officers, Sheriff deputies, and other law enforcement personnel evacuated 300-400 persons from the fire area.

Among some of the homes that were reported as destroyed or close to the fire's path were Carl Yost's, Jay Stephan's, Del Sheldon's, Nancy and David Lemmen's, Dick Wakeley's, Joe Kuck's, and RaxAnn Adam's.

Officer Dean Goss, who is also the assistant fire chief for the Grayling City and Township Fire Dept., said the destruction was unbelievable.

"I saw 14 houses burning in a single block in the Shaw Park area," he said. Goss said many homes on Pine Road and both sides of North Down River Road were lost. He said the first house that burned was on Pappy's Trail.

"There is no way to take an accurate count of the homes and cabins burned," stated Goss. "We evacuated about 300 people."

The fire path jumped around. One house on Stephan Bridge Rd. did not burn while houses on each side burned. Garages and outbuildings burned at Mike and Beth Wicland's but their house did not burn. That happened in several places.

Police suspect the blaze started near Pappy's Trail and a person burning brush was the cause.

While this major fire was burning, other fires were blazing in the county Tuesday afternoon. A fire in Indian Glen's destroyed homes there. Three small fires were reported near Arrowhead Rd.

Every township fire department in the county was called to fight the fires and Kalkaska County put out the Arrowhead Rd. fires. The DNR called in other area units and Camp Grayling units also assisted.

The strong gusting winds did not die down until some rain mercifully swept through the area about 8:30 p.m. But before the winds died down, they shifted from the southwest and the path of the fire went back to some areas it had missed before and more houses were lost.

Problems firefighters ran into were crown fires (fires racing among the tops of trees), power lines falling, and propane tanks exploding. About 1,400 Top of Michigan customers lost power because of downed lines.

Beth Wicland was at her home trying to gather up a few items before the fire came.

"It came down the power line and it sounded like a train coming," she said. "The heat and smoke were so bad we had to leave."

Police had trouble evacuating people. Some were refusing to leave the danger area. Other people were causing problems at the roadblocks and one man was arrested for carrying a weapon. As the firefighters began getting a handle on the blaze, reports of people looting in the evacuated areas started coming into the central dispatch office at the sheriff's dept.

People throughout Grayling pulled together during the tragedy. Motels offered lodging; restaurants and grocery stores offered food and items to firefighters and evacuated people. Camp Grayling opened its doors to the evacuated people for the night.

As the Crawford County Avalanche went to press early

"I saw 14 houses burning in a single block in the Shaw Park area."

--firefighter Dean Goss

Wednesday morning, DNR firefighters were planning on meeting at the Command Center set up at Duane LaMotte's Down River Pines store at the intersection of M-72 East and Stephan Bridge Rd. early Wednesday morning for the next step. Firefighters were concerned another dry, windy day would start up smoldering fires.

Rain Helped Knock Down Fire

By Irene Pettyjohn

Mother Nature's rain and cooler temperatures were extremely helpful in extinguishing the fires, said Duane Brooks, DNR fire officer.

"If the rains had not come and the winds died down as they did," he said, "the fire would have probably burned through the night and taken off and run all day the next day."

Brooks described the fire as "extremely dangerous." High winds fanned the flames moving the fire approximately nine miles in about 4 1/2 hours. He said there were so many people involved in evacuating the area and the fire was spreading so fast, the chance of someone getting trapped in the fire was a

very real possibility.

"Some people refused to move," he said, "and we can't make them leave. All we can do is warn them, give them the facts."

Grayling City and Township assistant fire chief Dean Goss said the intense heat and speed of the fire forced his firemen to get themselves and their equipment out of the Pappy's Trail area, abandoning some of the homes there. He said there were times when it was all they could do to stay ahead of the fire.

Brooks said the heat from any forest fire is tremendous. The energy released can create a full size tornado. He said this forest fire burned so intensely that it disintegrated the structures in its path, leaving only ash, cement work and scrap metal.

Tuesday's fire was a crown fire and Brooks said there is no technology known to fight a crown fire.

The second week in May is an historic week for forest fires in northern Michigan. On May 8, 1968, fires in Beaver Creek and South Branch townships burned over 6,000 acres. On May 10, 1975, 3,598 acres burned in the Bald Hill area and an additional 2,802 acres burned on North Down River Road. More than 25,000 acres were destroyed in the Mack Lake, Mio, fire on May 5, 1980, and 1,931 acres were lost in Ogemaw

"If the rains had not come and the winds died down as they did ... the fire would have probably burned through the night and taken off and run all day the next day."

County during the Damon Fire on May 9, 1987.

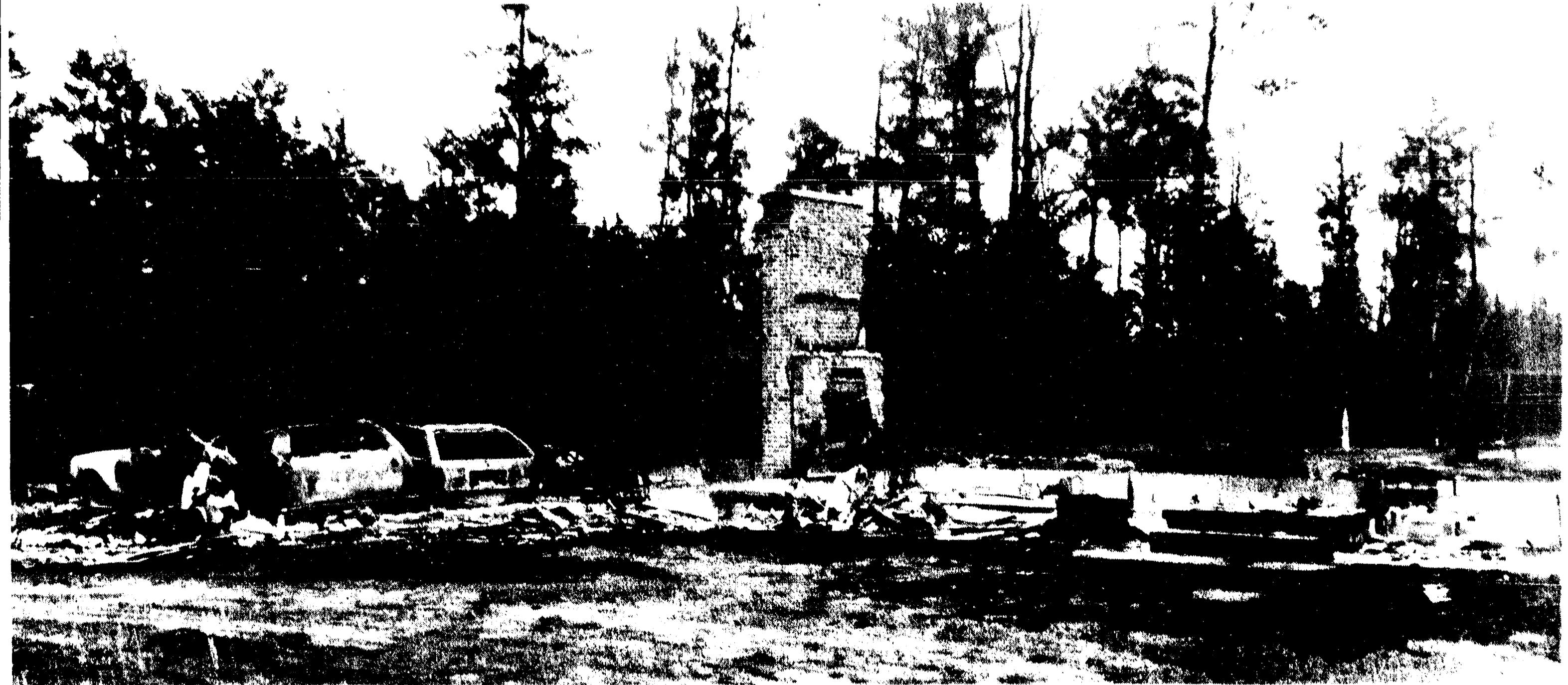
Brooks said the burning index on Tuesday afternoon was at 17.

"That's about as bad as it gets," he said.

In an effort to save time should a fire be reported, Brooks had equipment standing by at Wakeley Bridge and M-72 East and at McMasters Bridge and North Down River Road. Even with these precautions, he said they lost time getting to the South Branch fire because the equipment at McMasters Bridge and North Down River roads had to double back to Wakeley Bridge Road because the equipment was too heavy for the three ton load limit on McMasters Bridge.

Reprinted from May 17th issue

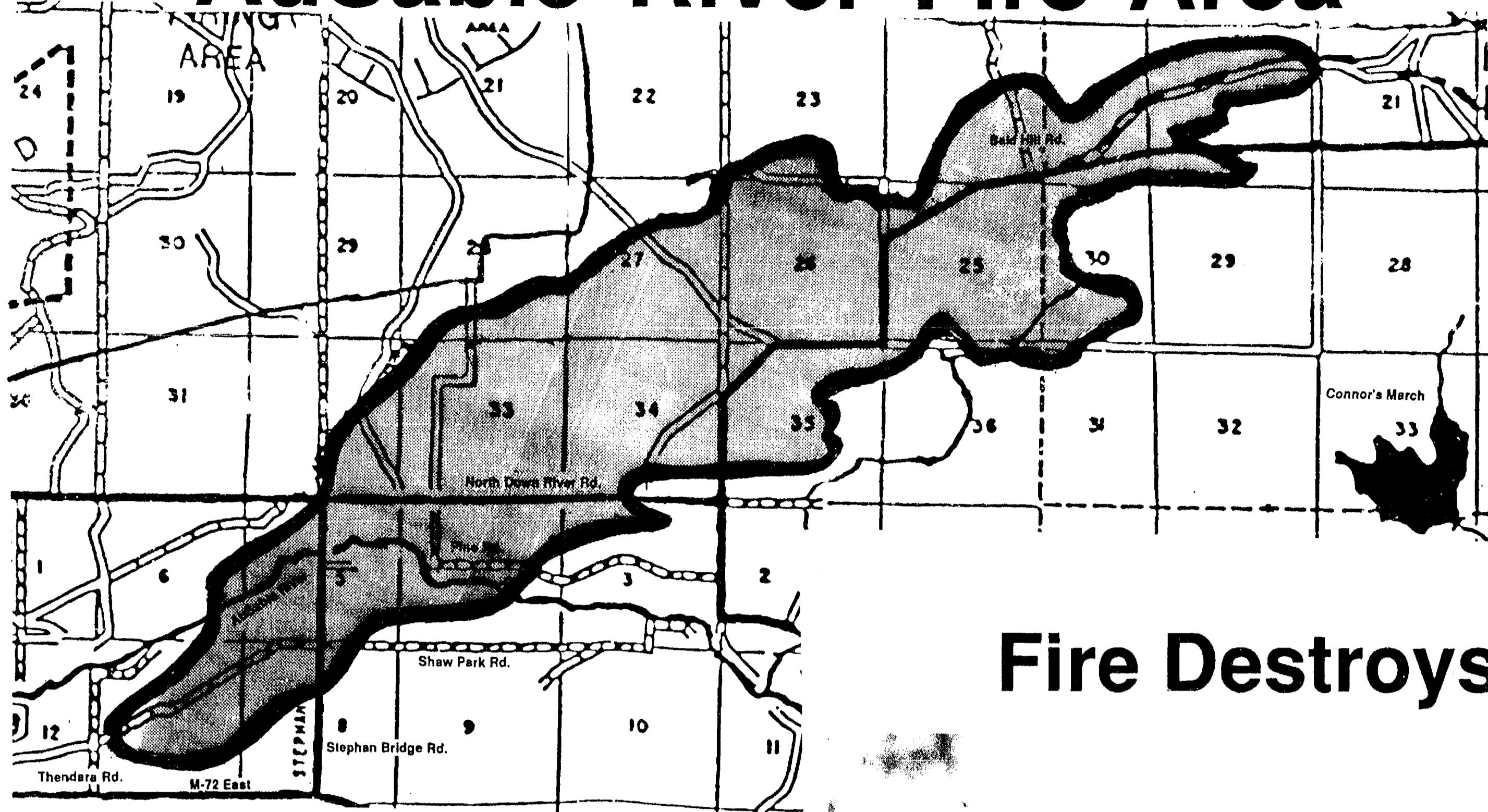
"The Most Destructive Fire in Crawford County"



SMOKING RUBBLE--The remains of this home on Pappy's Trail shows the destruction of Tuesday's fire. It also shows how the fire jumped around taking and leaving property. The fire destroyed the house and both cars, but left the clothes lines behind the house.

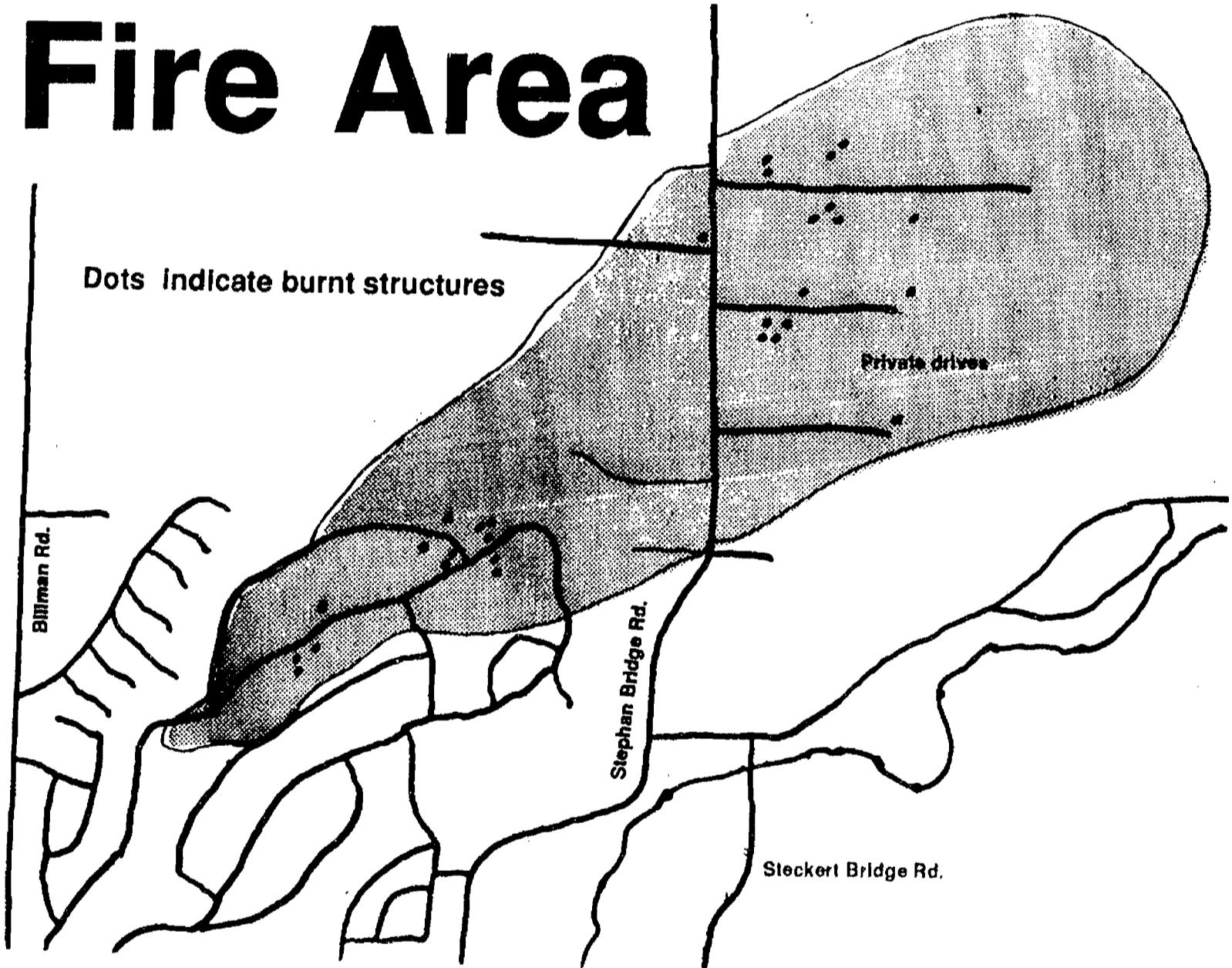
Photo by Jon Thompson

AuSable River Fire Area



Fire Destroys

South Branch Fire Area



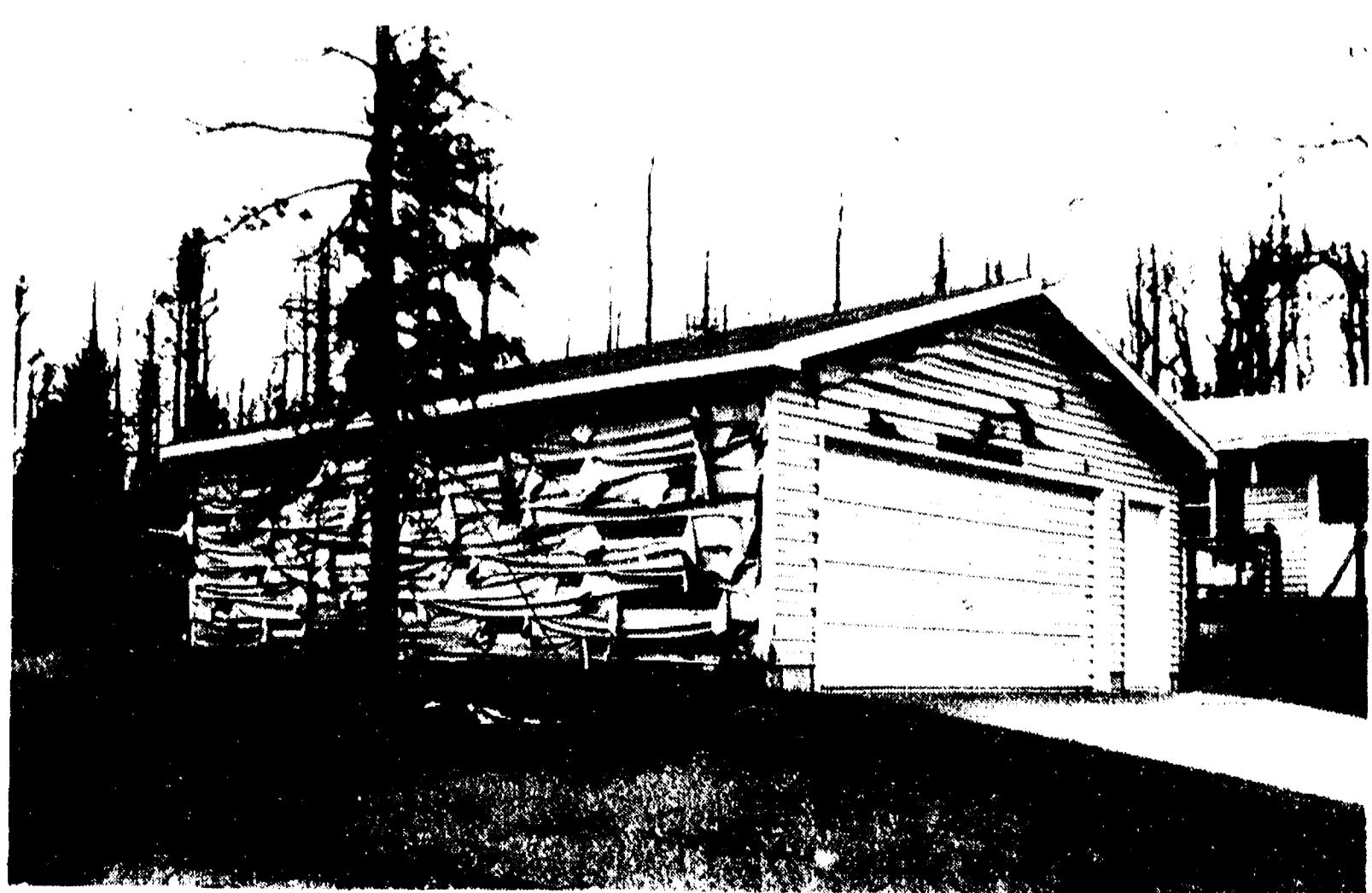
CROWN FIRE--Flames from the AuSable River fire could be seen above the trees. The blaze was a crown fire which is nearly impossible to stop.
Photo by James Dennis



TWO STORY HOME--This home was located on Pappy's Trail.
Photo by Jon Thompson



DELEON HOME--Only the chimneys and satellite dish remained of the Paul DeLeon home.



INTENSE HEAT--Fire destroyed Robert Muschiana's pole barn, but only melted the vinyl siding on his home and garage.
Photo by Jon Thompson

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5,000 Acres Burned

Fire Losses Hit \$3.5 Million

By Irene Pettyjohn

The most destructive forest fire in Crawford County history swept through the area on Tuesday, May 8, destroying homes and outbuildings valued at nearly \$3.5 million. The DNR said the fire was started by "human activity."

Miraculously, the only fire related injury reported was smoke inhalation by a fireman who was treated and released from Mercy Hospital. The injury occurred during the evacuation effort when the fireman pushed open a door and was met with a thick cloud of black smoke.

Reprinted from May 17th issue

The fire burned more than 5,000 acres destroying 81 residences (year-round homes, vacation homes, cabins and mobile homes), 115 outbuildings, and 37 motor vehicles such as snowmobiles, ORV's, boats, trucks, and cars.

The DNR estimates the fire burned more than 5,500 acres destroying 81 residences (year-round homes, vacation homes, cabins and mobile homes), 115 outbuildings, and 37 motor vehicles such as snowmobiles, ORV's, boats, trucks, and cars. Of the total acres burned, Grayling Township assistant assessor Curt Marshall estimated that approximately 3,500 acres was residential acreage valued at about \$850,000.

DNR fire officer Duane Brooks said the fire could be the most expensive forest fire in Michigan's history.

He said the fire appeared to have started off Thendara Road and burned out of control from about 3:56 to 11 p.m. The fire traveled in a north easterly direction for about nine miles jumping Stephen Bridge Road just south of the bridge, the AuSable River at Guides Rest, and North Down River Road twice before it was contained in a swampy area near Dyer Trail. It was finally extinguished by heavy rains on Thursday.

Governor James Blanchard declared the county a disaster area at about 10:50 p.m. on Tuesday and he and DNR director David Hales visited the burned area on Wednesday afternoon. Designation as a disaster area will allow victims to apply for

state aid to help with reconstruction efforts.

DNR fire fighting units from all over northern and north central Michigan were called in to battle the blaze. Volunteer fire departments from surrounding counties, as well as every fire dept. in Crawford County assisted in the fire fighting effort. The Michigan National Guard fire unit assisted with men and equipment. An Ohio National Guard helicopter crew fought the fire with their Bambi Bucket until additional helicopters could be flown in by the Michigan National Guard. Eventually three buckets were used to carry water to the fire.

The Crawford County Sheriff Dept. was assisted by the Michigan State Police, military MP's, and sheriff departments from several neighboring counties. Conservation officers were called in from all over northern Michigan.

About 150 persons worked together to evacuate the area, contain the fire, and control traffic. Equipment at the fire included 73 tractors/plows and water units.

Brooks said there was machinery lined up for about a block down both sides of Stephens Bridge Road.

More than 300 persons were evacuated Tuesday afternoon. Shelter was provided at the Michelson Memorial United

DNR fire officer Duane Brooks said the fire could be the most expensive forest fire in Michigan's history.

Methodist Church, the Grayling High School gymnasium and Camp Grayling. Some stayed with friends.

Residents were allowed to return to the evacuated area about 4 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon. Some residents complained because they had been kept out of the area 17 hours after the fire had been contained, but Brooks said this was necessary to allow the electric utilities time to cut power to all downed electric wires and to ensure there was no further danger of propane gas tank explosions.

Many of those who had been evacuated returned to find their homes as they had left them, but others found only ash where their homes once stood.



TOTAL LOSS--This is all that remained of Carl and Sally Yost's home on Stephan Bridge Road. After consuming their home the fire traveled on, leaving their garage intact. Photo by Irene Pettyjohn



CLOUDS OF SMOKE--The billowing clouds of smoke that rose above the tree tops warned residents for miles that a major forest fire was ripping through the county. The smoke could be smelled in Grayling.

Losses at \$500,000

South Branch Fire Burns 615 Acres

By Irene Pettyjohn

At the same time fire fighters were fighting the big fire, two smaller fires were burning in South Branch Township.

DNR officials believe a downed power line started the fire on Sunrise Road off McMasters Bridge Road that burned about 15 acres. The third fire was located in the Indian Glens subdivision, near the Roscommon County line and burned about 615 acres before fire fighters were able to bring it under control.

The Indian Glens fire was spotted at 5:06 p.m. by the DNR airplane. It was contained at 4:30 a.m.

"The rain at 8:30 that night really contained the fire," said Jim Fisher, DNR fire supervisor, "but we didn't call it contained until we had a line around the fire."

Fisher said an initial estimate of structure damage, suppression costs and timber damage is \$500,000. He said one pole barn contained nine snowmobiles, four ORV's and several pieces of heavy equipment.

"Those kinds of losses add up fast," he said.

Property destroyed in South Branch Township included five motor homes, ten travel trailers, 15 sheds, one automobile, two pole barns and one garage. Property damaged included a travel

trailer, cabin and one home.

Fisher said one travel trailer that was thought to have survived the fire burned the following day when temperatures built up inside the trailer causing it to catch fire. He said firemen saw smoke coming from the trailer, but it had already been gutted.

Most of the property destroyed in South Branch Township was privately owned. Fisher said he recommended that property owners contact a consulting forester for advice on replanting the burned woodlands.

Human activity was also cited by DNR officials as the cause of this fire.

Reprinted from May 17th issue

"The rain at 8:30 that night really contained the [Indian Glens] fire," said Jim Fisher, DNR fire supervisor.



MECHANICAL SKELETONS--Automobiles caught in the path of the fire became scrap metal. The rubber on these tires was melted leaving the van sitting on its rims.

Photo by Jon Thompson

Property Losses

Grayling Township
Reprinted from May 17th issue

Name	Address	Structures lost
Arlene Fraley	Grayling	home, garage
Murray Adams	Grayling	home, garage, barn
Ronald & Hazel Dean	Hastings	mobile home, shed
Michael & Beth Wieland	Grayling	pole barn
Joseph & Ester Kuck	Grayling	mobile home
Delbert & Love Sheldon	Grayling	home, pole barn
Stanley Clark	Walled Lake	home, garage
David Clark, et al	Grand Blanc	mobile home
Mrs. Fred Bloetscher	N. Miami Beach, FL	home, garage
Y. Szkoenicki	Grayling	garage
Jay Stephan, Sr.	Grayling	home, garage
Arthur Kerle	Grayling	home, garage
Paul Deleon	Southgate	home, garage
William Meagher	Essexville	home
Mark & Jessie Pegouskie	Grayling	mobile home
Bruce Murray	Grayling	pole barn & home damage
Steven Christenson	Royal Oak	home
John Murray	Grayling	mobile home, garage
Ward Rathbun	Grayling	home, garage
Richard Lee	Kenly, N.C.	mobile home, pole barn
John Aleman	Grayling	home, garage
Charles Dixson	Westland	damage to home
Ernest Angel	Clarkston	home
Leigh Bonner	Mt. Clemens	travel trailers - 2
W. E. Lewis	Garden City	home, garage
Herbert Buddenborg	Grayling	home
George Miller	Unionville	garage
Ronald Hahn	Warren	home
James Lupan	Grayling	home, garage
Carl Yost	Grayling	home
Guy Williams	Flint	home
Richard Horton	Grayling	home, garage
Edward Robinson	Grayling	home
Wayne Ferguson	Clark Lake	mobile home
William Snyder	Grayling	cabin
Hoot Owl Hunt Club	Walled Lake	mobile home, garage
William Curtis	Grayling	home, garage
Theodore Sieger	Grayling	garage
J. E. Frankenfield	Otisville	home, garage
Sue Fox	Grayling	home
Everett Beattie	Grayling	mobile home
Brian & Joyce Starks	Burton	mobile home
Robert Tubbs	Detroit	mobile home
Roger & Judy Heliste	Royal Oak	mobile home
Leon Wallace	Flint	mobile home
Mary Stowers	Crane Hill, AL	home
Leslie Huffines	Hazel Park	mobile home
Roy Barrett	Gladwin	home
Douglas Gardner	Grayling	home
Donald Steffes	Grayling	pole barn
Thomas Killoran	Grayling	mobile home
William Middleton	Grayling	home
Webb Slusher	Tipton	home
Thomas & Joseph Swartz	Mt. Clemens	home, garage
Michael Sowuleuski	Grayling	home
Gerald Falaska	Jackson	home
Richard Wakeley	Grayling	home, garage
Joy Wright	Grayling	home
Ronald McClure	Grayling	home, pole barn
James Seaman	Clark Lake	home
David & Nancy Lemmen	Grayling	home, garage
Ronald Lewis	Grayling	home
James Sheldon	Grayling	home
Clyde Schwartz	Utica	garage
Thomas Murray	Warren	home
Robert Muschiana	Grayling	pole barn
Fleet Finance	W. Palm Beach, FL	home
Jack Millikin	Grayling	cabin
David Pettyjohn	Grayling	shed
Marvin Smith	Livonia	home, 2 sheds
Anthony Foley	Rochester Hills	home, garage
John Welton	Hillsdale	shed

South Branch Township

Duane Hilden	Center Line	travel trailers - 2
Larry Schultz	Warren	motor home, shed
James Stec	Detroit	travel trailer, shed
Constance Faustman	Fairgate	travel trailer
Frank Horvath	Southgate	shed
Charlton Thomas	Belleville	auto
M.J. Ellsworth	Jackson	travel trailer, shed
James Baker	Riverview	2 travel trailers, 2 sheds
Gary Selden	Portland	2 travel trailers, 2 sheds
Michael Marriott	Jackson	shed
Thomas Rourk	Allen Park	trailer
Hugh Sherrard	Clarklake	cabin damage
Frank Hursey	Southgate	mobile home
Anne Sisk	Roscommon	pole barn
Clarence Stanley	Southfield	home damage, pole barn
Jay Gladwin	Ferndale	shed
Myron Wise	Detroit	travel trailer
Ralph Smith	Lincoln Park	mobile home, shed
Ronald Clark	Roseville	shed, travel trailer damage
George Heacock	Redford Twp.	shed, plumbing
Arthur Huffman	W. Bloomfield	mobile home, shed
Rev. Isadore J. Mikulski	Oscoda	garage, shed



SACK LUNCHES--Red Cross volunteers packed hundreds of sack lunches and then distributed them along with coffee and cold drinks to fire victims and volunteers working in the burned area.

Photo by Irene Pettyjohn

Community Support Poured In

As soon as people in Crawford County learned of the seriousness of the fire and its effect on their neighbors, the community began looking for ways to help.

LTC Wayne Kopka, Camp Commander, open Camp Grayling's barracks for about 30 people Tuesday night. Glen's Market offered groceries to feed those who had been evacuated.

Personnel from the 1071st ran a shuttle bus between Grayling and Camp Grayling, and between buildings on the base. Bobby Martinez stayed at the telephone, trying to help people calling the Camp locate their families and relaying messages. Area ministers were contacted to talk to the people.

Clark's and Mac's drug stores opened so that prescriptions left at home could be filled. Mercy Hospital offered free medical treatment to anyone suffering from injuries or illness caused by the fire and prepared breakfast and dinner at the Knights of Columbus hall on Thursday and Friday for fire victims. More than 2300 meals were served.

Families from the Michelson Methodist church invited evacuated persons into their homes, and area motels offered rooms at no charge. Restaurants prepared and delivered food to the fire fighters and police agencies Tuesday night, and offered meals to fire victims. On Wednesday morning the Knights of Columbus hall be-

came the community disaster relief center and representatives from the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Dept. of Social Services, and insurance companies began meeting with people whose homes had been destroyed by the fire.

Crawford County Emergency Management director Howard Taylor began compiling information about the fire for state and federal agencies.

Everyone who suffered any kind of loss as a result of Tuesday's fire is being asked to report the loss to Taylor so that a total assessment of the damage caused by the fire can be compiled. Governmental agencies use this information to determine the area's eligibility for low interest loans and grants. Fire victims are asked to report their losses even if they do not intend to request any type of assistance.

In addition to scores of local volunteers, about 25 Red Cross volunteers from all over Michigan arrived to help with the recovery effort. The Red Cross nurse came from Nebraska.

Throughout the week the numbers of homes lost and damaged and the number of persons affected by Tuesday's fire continued to increase as people registered at the disaster center. At Avalanche press time, the American Red Cross had registered 50 families. Thirty-seven families received financial assistance from the Red Cross at a cost of more than \$11,000.

RoxAnn Adams, a volunteer at the center, said their records indicated that 48 year-round residences were completely destroyed by the fire, leaving 136 persons homeless. The estimated value for these homes is \$3,675,780 and she said that estimate is probably low.

Adams said the estimated loss for both destroyed and damaged property is well over \$4.5 million. She said nearly 400 people have been affected by the fire.

The good news is there appears to be all kinds of assistance available to fire victims through the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and DSS, but people must come into the disaster center as soon as possible and register with the various agencies there.

"If they don't come in to see us," said Darlene Adas, a Red Cross family services officer, "we don't know they need help."

Funds are available for security deposits, appliance replacement, utility bills, relocation expenses and other needs for those who qualify.

Emotional support was made available to Grayling Elementary School students on Wednesday following the fire from the school district's social worker, Donna Ribaudo, and Craig Hexham, of New Life Community Services. Children were encouraged to talk about the fire and Ribaudo and Hexham were there to answer questions.

Counselors at the Grayling High School also met with students whose homes were destroyed.

Further support will be available on Monday, May 21, at 9 a.m., when Kristi McKenzie from the Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, holds a seminar on crises grief recovery at the Grayling Holiday Inn.

Rev. Robert Gordon, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, said school counselors, clergy, or anyone in a position to counsel victims of the fire are encouraged to attend.

Food, clothing, furniture

Reprinted from May 17th issue

Children Raise \$305.98 For Fire Victims

Age has not been a factor in the relief effort. Fifteen children, between the age of 6 and 19, sold cool aid, peanut butter cookies, and popcorn on Saturday and Sunday, May 12 and 13, at the corner of North Down River and Wakeley Bridge roads. On Saturday, the children raised \$38 and on Sunday they raised \$267.98. The money was taken by several of the children to Rev. Robert Gordon and asked that it be used to help victims of the fire. Pastor Gordon said several of the children came from families who are themselves, victims of the fire. The children's names are: James Love 10, Marty 7, Kathi Oberg 16, Becky Oberg 15, Jill Love 12, Jody Love 6, Mike Green 12, Susan Dedafoe 11, Louis Kehr 10, Janice Dedafoe 9, Wendy Dedafoe 7, Joshua Sheldon 8, Michelle Oberg 19, Chad Lingle 9, and Leah Lingle 12.

Children from the Grayling Elementary School donated canned goods for the relief effort.

Musical To Aid Victims

A benefit musical for persons affected by the May 8 Crawford County fire will be presented by the Good News Choir of the Michelson Memorial United Methodist Church in Grayling.

The Choir will perform the musical "Get On Board, Children" (or, what do you do on a rainy day in an ark?) on Sunday, May 20, at 6:30 p.m., at the Michelson Church, 400 Michigan Avenue, Grayling.

Donations will be accepted, and the proceeds will go to the AuSable Ministerial Association for distribution.

DAV Funds Available To Disabled Vets

The Disabled American Veterans have disaster relief funds available for service connected disabled veterans who suffered losses in the fire. If you wish to apply for assistance please contact the Disabled American Veterans Service Office, 348-5645, in the Crawford County courthouse.

Disaster specialists of the American Red Cross are finishing up the assistance they've been giving victims of the May 8th fire that struck Crawford County. But after the Red Cross Service Center in the Knights of Columbus Hall relocates to 410 Cedar on Saturday, May 19th, help will still be available.

The Choir will perform the musical "Get On Board, Children" (or, what do you do on a rainy day in an ark?) on Sunday, May 20, at 6:30 p.m., at the Michelson Church, 400 Michigan Avenue, Grayling.

Donations will be accepted, and the proceeds will go to the AuSable Ministerial Association for distribution.

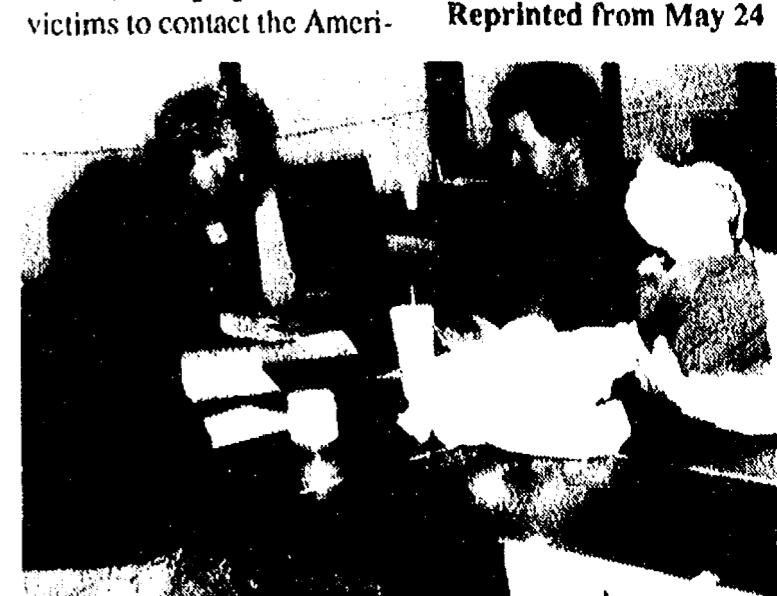
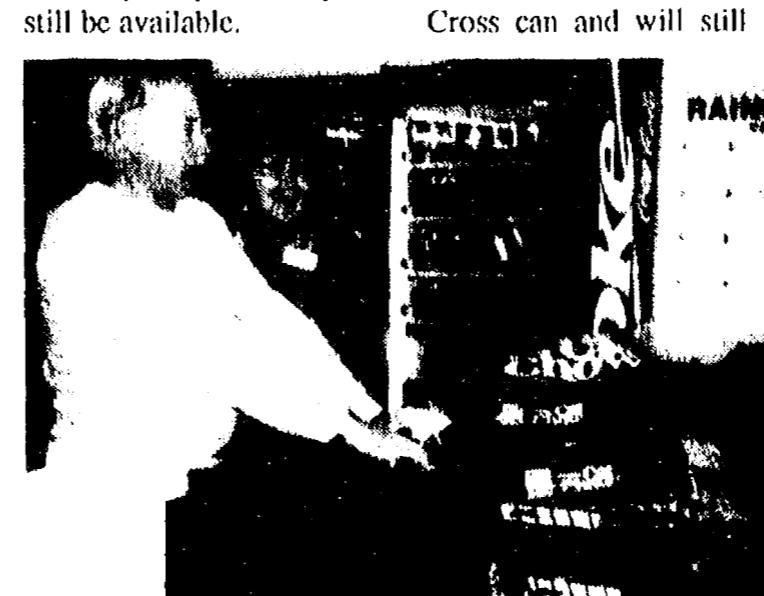
Red Cross Still Offering Assistance To Fire Victims

available to help," said Joseph. "There are also still cases in various stages of assistance and they will be available to stay in touch with Red Cross by calling the local chapter number at 517-348-9745."

Joseph is joined by the Chapter Chairman, Paul Thomson, in urging all disaster victims to contact the Ameri-

can Red Cross if they have not done so. "All Red Cross disaster assistance is free and the victims are not expected to pay back any aid that they receive." Thomson noted that Red Cross aid in time of disaster is a gift of the American people.

Reprinted from May 24



DONATED--Dog and cat food was donated to the Crawford County Animal Control Shelter for our four-legged fire victims. Pictured with the food are K-Mart Assistant Manager Judy Morgan and husband Bud. Other K-Mart donators were Joyce Martin, Tami Cook, Marsha Kroell, Rose Ames, Chris Hanger, and friend Ken Irish.

BURNED OUT--Jonathan, Kimberly and six month old Amanda Weymers were downstate when Tuesday's fire destroyed their home on North Down River Road. The Weymers are shown with Red Cross volunteers.

What Comes Next in Aftermath of Fire?

As residents begin the rebuilding process, emergency services in the county are moving from their mass care phase that provided emergency shelters and dining hall meals to providing individual and possibly long term assistance to the victims of last week's fire.

Red Cross family services officer Darlene Adas said the Red Cross has financial assistance available for temporary housing at area motels and hotels, and can also help with some or all of the cost of rebuilding for individuals with limited resources. She said all assistance from the American Red Cross comes

Reprinted from May 17th issue

from grants, not loans, and does not require repayment. She said representatives from the national office would be in the area as long as they are needed.

Donations of food and clothing are no longer needed, but temporary housing that can be rented for three to six months while families rebuild is desperately needed. Especially housing that will allow pets.

Grayling Township assistant assessor Curt Marshall said most of the people he talked to intend to rebuild their homes as soon as possible. Rebuilding the destroyed forests will take

much longer. DNR officials are estimating reforestation will take 50 years.

Meanwhile Forestry Management is busy inventorying the damaged forest and plans to offer the salvageable timber for sale.

Jim McMillian, DNR forest manager, said damaged jack pines would be chipped and offered to cogeneration plants in Midland, Lincoln and Hillman. The larger red pines (over 10 inches in diameter) will be sold for timber. Because of the threat of damage from bark beetles, McMillian said the timber harvest would have to take within the next three weeks or so.

Another victim of Tuesday's fire is the tiny Kirtland's warbler. About a quarter of the "active" warbler habitat located on Bald Hill Road between Grayling and Lovells was destroyed as well as about half of an "on-line" plantation being developed for future use. Dr. Sylvia Taylor, district wildlife biologist at Mio, said the burned portion of the plantation, planted this spring, had a value of about \$50,000.

"We would have lost a lot more active habitat if the new plantation hadn't acted like a fire break," she said. "We cannot have fires like that."

In an effort to cut down the numbers of forest fires, Dr. Taylor said the DNR has developed the Kirtland's Plan which

will provide more warbler habitat by keeping the forest young. She said the plan is ideal because it will also provide the most production for timber and is the safest way to manage a jack pine forest. Since jack pines reforest themselves during a forest fire when the heat opens its pinecones spilling out the seeds, Dr. Taylor said the DNR will be artificially regenerating the forest by planting young trees.

"I know people have a hard time with clear cutting," said Dr. Taylor, "but these open areas serve as fire breaks and prevent large forest fires, like the Mack Lake fire."

What affect the lost Kirtland's warbler habitat destroyed in Tuesday's blaze will have on the endangered bird is still uncertain. Dr. Taylor said they will know more after they conduct their warbler census in June. She said she had not heard any Kirtland's warblers prior to the fire, but when she toured the burned area on Monday, she heard them singing.

Dr. Taylor said there is a Kirtland's habitat plantation near Red Oak and another near Lovells ready for the birds.

The Kirtland's warbler is an endangered species that divides its time between north central Michigan in the summer and the Bahamas during the winter. There are only about 200 pairs of the small birds left. The birds usually return to Michigan during the second week in May.

Some Residents Will Rebuild

By Irene Pettyjohn

John Murray, a victim of the fire, who lost his home on the corner of Shaw Park and Stephan Bridge roads, said he had been told for years that Crawford County with all its Jack Pines was a prime candidate for a devastating forest fire, but said he never believed it.

"I always knew it was going to happen," said DNR fire officer Duane Brooks. "I just didn't know when."

Murray said his insurance would not replace everything he had lost in the fire. He said he would be able to replace his home and most of its contents, but not his garage or recreation vehicles.

"I'll rebuild," he said, "but then I am going to think seriously about putting the place up for sale. Two fires in three years is enough for me," said Murray.

A chimney is all that remains of Linda and John Speese's house on North Down River Road. Linda and John live in Oakland County and planned to retire in Crawford County in a few years. Besides their home, John said they lost 20 acres of woods that is now only a blackened graveyard of smoldering stumps.

"It's crazy," said Linda, "the woods are gone the house is gone, but not a single leaf on the pony that is located about 1/2 feet from where the house stood is even singed."

Jonathan, Kimberly and six month old Amanda Weymers had gone downstate to pick up a bed, and returned to find that everything but the bed had been destroyed by the fire. They did not have any insurance.

"We were just getting started up here," said 21-year old Jonathan. He said he was waiting until he got a better job before he got homeowners insurance.

Patrick and Peggy's mobile home was spared, but they lost their travel trailer and snowblower. Peggy said everything inside their home is covered with black smoke. They estimated their loss at \$15,000.

Two historic homes in the County were among the homes destroyed by fire. The Schreiber farm house, owned by Delbert Sheldon, was built in 1889 by Hugo Schreiber, Fay Bovee's grandfather.

The Hoffman farm, owned by Theodore Sieger, was also destroyed. Both homes were located on North Down River Road.

Reprinted from May 17th issue

Landowners Faced With Tough Choices About Burned Timber

By Irene Pettyjohn

Experts in the field of forest management met with Crawford County landowners last Friday at the courthouse to suggest ways of salvaging their burned timber and reforest their properties.

Foresters Jim McMillian, from the DNR, and Jim Wadsworth, from Weyerhaeuser, Barb Stauffer, from the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (ASCS), and Roy Spangler, from the Cooperative Extension Services explained to landowners several options available to them regarding their timber salvage efforts.

Wadsworth told the group the Weyerhaeuser Structurwood Plant was going to try to increase its consumption of jack pine from 25 percent to 30 or 40 percent in an effort to offer an increased market for Crawford County landowners who lost their forests in May 8th's devastating fire.

Weyerhaeuser is also offering the services of their foresters, Wadsworth and Mike Castle, as consultants to fire victims to help them make important decisions such as when to harvest, whether to harvest, what markets are available to them and finally what to do with the land. Landowners will also have to decide whether they want to let the forest reforest itself naturally with jack pines, or choose to plant other types of trees.

General manager of the Grayling Weyerhaeuser plant Rodger Anger said the effort on their part was in no way intended to be opportunistic, but rather to offer their assistance in the community's resource recovery process.

McMillian told landowners the trees killed by the intense heat and fire on their property could still be valuable for pulp and saw logs if they act within the next 60 to 90 days to have it harvested. After that time, McMillian said bark beetles will begin destroying what is left of the wood.

Property owners with three acres or more appear to have a better chance of selling their timber to logging companies than small lot owners, said McMillian.

"The person with two acres or less will probably have to clear their land themselves," he said. "The more acreage a person has the more likely they are to be able to sell it commercially."

McMillian said small lot owners can either cut the timber for their own wood use or they can try to market it locally for fuel wood. Persons with more property will probably be able to market the "smaller stuff" (less than ten inches in diameter) for chipping to be sold to cogeneration for energy plants in Midland, Lincoln and Hillman.

According to McMillian, there is a good market for saw logs ten inches or more in diameter. He advised persons with marketable saw logs to contact the DNR Field Office for suggestions regarding ways to sell the timber.

Not all the trees in the burned area were killed. Spangler cautioned persons thinking about having the trees on their property cut to have a forester examine the trees to determine which trees are dead and which are not.

It sounds incredible, but McMillian said not all the trees in the burned area are dead. If the top half of the tree is still green, he said landowners should monitor it before cutting it down. He said there is a good chance those trees will survive the fire.

Trees that are all brown or black, with needles that are bent and curled, are most likely dead and should be harvested as soon as possible.

The SCS conservationist and forester are also available to all victims of the fire to assist them in the re-establishment of vegetation.

Stauffer told the group that she was not sure, at this time, what help is going to be available for reforestation and streambank erosion projects.

Those property owners who have previously registered their land as agricultural, forestry producing, or wildlife lands with the SCS are eligible for the SCS cost share programs. These programs make available grass seed mixtures, trees for reforestation, and wildlife vegetation. Those who are not registered should contact the Roscommon SCS office to inquire of available programs and to sign up for the fall seedling program.

The spring seedling program is over, but Stauffer said persons intending to replant their burned acreage should register with the SCS for fall and spring 1991 seedlings. This fall red and white pine, douglas fir, and blue, white and norway spruce trees will be available for a nominal fee.

"We are a unit of government and not out to make a profit," said Stauffer. "Our fees are set to cover our costs for the two-year seedlings."

In the spring, besides the pine trees, the SCS will have shrubs such as honeysuckle, Autumn Olive, Red Osier Dogwood, Mountain Ash and Russian Olive. Small wildlife ornamental trees such as Washington Hawthorn, White Birch and Hybrid Poplar will also be available.

Stauffer suggested that property owners consult with a forester before any planting is started. She said they can advise on what types of trees are best suited for this area. To prevent streambank erosion, Stauffer suggested cedar posts, rock rip rap, and streambank shrubs. Before any river restoration is started, she said owners of river frontage should consult with the DNR to see what is allowed under the recently approved Natural Rivers Act.

Landowners with questions regarding the harvesting of their burned forests or reforestation of the land are urged to contact the DNR, the Weyerhaeuser Structurwood Plant, and the Soil Conservation Service office in Roscommon.

"Nobody wants these landowners to be taken advantage of," said Stauffer. "They have lost enough already."

Reprinted from May 24 issue

Buildings In Clearings Fared Better

To the untrained observer, Tuesday's fire appeared to jump around taking this house and that one, but leaving the house over there without rhyme nor reason, but according to DNR officials, in many cases there were precise reasons why some structures burned and others did not.

On Good Morning Michigan this week, Scott Heather, from the DNR Regional Headquarters in Roscommon, told viewers that buildings in clearings, away from pine trees, fared much better than those sitting in a wooded area.

During the program, Heather suggested that homeowners cut pine trees back 75 feet from their structures and replace them with less flammable trees such as maples, oaks, and poplars. Shrubs should not be planted next to buildings.

Other suggestions included keeping wood piles away from buildings and leaving a hose connected to an outside faucet.

Reprinted from May 17th issue

Articles and Photographs Reprinted from May 10, 17, 24, and 31st Issues of the Crawford Co. Avalanche

FIRE BREAKS--Fire fighters plowed wide ditches in an effort to save structures from the fire.

Photo by Jon Thompson

Verse or Worse

By Joe Murphy

Hell's Fury

The fire struck like Hell's fury
The quiet country side became a raging hell
Billowing smoke filled the air
Full of wood smoke's smell

High winds in the jackpine forests
Along with the weather being hot and dry
Sent the fire scampering here and there
Sending each containment plan awry

Fire units from the near by area
Came to help as good neighbors do
The D.N.R. and the National Guard
And some private contractors too

Many homes were lost to the fire
But their efforts saved quite a few
Men working in that hot smoky hell
Did all that men could do

No lives were lost in the fire
Thanks to the evacuation plan
That was first to save property when possible
But first of all save man

When finally the fire was defeated
With some help from the Man Above
The fire's victims could find solace
In an outpouring of Christian love

Folks rallied to help their neighbors
In their great hour of need
Hell's fury may have destroyed those homes
But God's love made folks pay heed



REFORESTATION--Carrie Trudgeon, 20, of Grayling, and Angie Parker, 19, of Roscommon, are shown planting jack pine seedlings to replace the Kirtland's warbler habitat lost in the May 8th fire. As of Wednesday afternoon, the four member Michigan Youth Corps crew had planted over 7,000 trees. The project will continue for about three weeks. Not pictured are Henry Cousins and Scott Cochran, of Grayling.

Opinions

Articles and Photographs Reprinted from May 10, 17, 24, and 31st Issues of the Crawford Co. Avalanche

Northern Views

By Jon Thompson

Here are ten things I'll carry with me from that tragic fire:

1. Anyone who felt or saw that horrible wind pushing the forest fire knows how lucky we are that no human life was lost.

2. At one point Tuesday afternoon on May 8 there were two large fires in Grayling Township, one large fire in South Branch, and several small ones along Arrowhead Rd. One fire was moving toward Lovells and the South Branch and Arrowhead fires were pointed in the direction of Grayling. As strong as the wind was blowing and as dry as this county has been, guess what scary thoughts started creeping into people's thoughts?

3. Our policemen, DNR conservation officers, DNR, Camp Grayling, township, and city firefighters put in some heroic efforts. Please store that in your memories.

4. At nearly the same time Tuesday night that some people were actually praying for the rain to hit the fire area, the first reports of looting came in. I was madder than hell. But later on it became apparent the number of good people wanting to help outnumbered the looters probably 10,000 to 10.

5. The millions of dollars lost may grab headlines but the losses that seem to hurt the most are the possessions lost that hold special memories. Possessions treasured because they can never be replaced.

6. I don't agree with letting the Governor and media into the area before the homeowners. Homeowners deserve to be put in front of politicians and media.

7. "The 2nd week of May." I had an eerie feeling the first time in 1983 I heard DNR firefighter Duane Brooks say that the 2nd week in May has traditionally been the worst week of the year for fires in Crawford County. Almost all the big fires have struck during that one week.

8. We had that week's newspaper just about finished Tuesday afternoon when the fire struck. Because of all the rumors flying around, we rebuilt pages to include a forest fire story, stayed up all night covering the action, and took the pages to the printer in Gaylord at 5:30 a.m. hoping to have newspapers back in Grayling earlier than usual for people wanting information. A part broke on the press and we didn't get the newspapers back to town until 9:15 a.m.

9. We have some of the most independent, stubborn people in the nation living in our county. But during a disaster, they're also the strongest, most determined, and even the most caring.

10. Something that made the loss of all the homes, structures, possessions, pets, wildlife, and forests even tougher to swallow was an observation by Grayling firefighter Dean Goss on Wednesday after the fire: "If this rain had come a day sooner, all those houses and everything would still be here."

Letters to the Editor

Crawford County Is Filled With Wonderful, Caring People

Dear Jon,

I have never written a letter to an Editor before, but I think the events of the past few days warrant it.

I want to thank everyone who had anything to do with fighting the fire and furnishing aid and comfort to the fighters and evacuees alike.

To our dear Lord, His holy

Mother, His Angels, and His

Saints for mercifully sparing the lives of all the people involved and for sparing the homes He did, ours included. For the saving and healing rain that got here just in the nick of time. We are not worthy. Thank you.

We had dear friends and neighbors who lost everything they owned in the fire and we are so very, very sorry. But you already know....

To Rex and Barbara Shepard for opening their hearts and their homes to us while the fire burned. To Rudy and Bobbie Martinez for the kind offer of their home to us, and to Terry and Rosemary Gallagher of Roscommon who offered us an apartment. Thank you.

To the people who gave us their best wishes, their prayers and their love, at Glen's, the Grayling Country Club, Moore's Auto Parts, you know who you are...thank you.

A very sincere, from the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU and job well done, to every DNR Crew, all the fire department who come from all over Northern Michigan and the Michigan National Guard Units 1439th and 1440th for risking life and limb to contain this horrible, devastating fire. To Duane and Brenda LaMotte at "Function Junction" for a warm place to sit and hot coffee, comfort and kind words while we waited to go back to the burned over area.

In mentioning the National Guard, men from the 1439th and 1440th manned the Camp Grayling fire trucks and drivers, assisting the DNR and all the fire departments in containing the fire.

A special congratulations and job well done to SSG Tom Shepard, SSG Dick LaPan and SPC Tom Baldwin for keeping Gate's AuSable Fishing Lodge protected during the fire. You will never get it from him. Mr. Gates was quoted as saying it was an act of God that kept his lodge from burning. Knowing his attitude toward the Guard and how the majority of people feel toward him, I would say it was an act of God that you buried your personal feelings and kept spraying. Well done Gentlemen.

To the Michigan State Police, the Crawford County Sheriff's Department, The Roscommon County Sheriff's Department and all other police departments I don't know about, and the people behind the scenes at these departments, for their fast action in setting up road blocks and evacuating all of us, the maintenance of those road blocks had to require considerable patience, and you came through with flying colors. For patrolling the fire devastated areas after the fires went through, for acting as guides to those of us who needed to see if we still had homes, thank you.

To the local chapter Red Cross Volunteers and Insurance Agents, the Pastors of all the churches and all the businesses in Grayling who provided food, bedding, care, comfort and spirited guidance during this most trying of times. Thank you and God Bless you.

To Top O' Michigan Rural Electric Company and GTE North for their co-operation during the fire and for the quick restoration of services after the fire. Thank you.

To all the people who washed dishes, served food, donated clothing, blankets, comfort, your time, to everyone of you, thank you and God bless you.

ISU set up twenty four hour phone watch and guided evacuees to assistance. 1438th Engineers set up a dining hall on Camp Grayling and pro-

vided beds for evacuees. Thank you.

1071 HEMCO was attending AT or summer camp when the fire occurred, and they were the first to get flood lights set up and portable generators running at the fire command center. Those generators were manned for over thirty six hours by members of 1071st. The Mess Section started cooking food, provided by Glen's at no charge, about 10:00 p.m., Tuesday night to provide hot meals for the firefighters and evacuees. They cooked all night long Tuesday and all day Wednesday. They finally turned over food operations to the Red Cross Thursday in the morning. They provided a shuttle bus to transport evacuees out to Camp Grayling and shelter. Thank you.

Brigadier General Schulze,

Adjutant General of the Ohio National Guard, offered the men and equipment that were here to help fight the fire and he made it known that if they weren't enough, he would send more. The helicopters that carried the huge buckets full of water to help drench the fire belonged to Ohio National Guard. Thank you.

To all units of Camp Grayling, and the Ohio National Guard, Gentlemen, and Ladies, you can be proud of yourselves and your Units. Well done.

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My Sincere Thanks To:

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- ★ DAVE NIEDERER
- ★ JODI HARWOOD
- ★ KARY HARWOOD
- ★ TODD GABRIEL
- ★ JERRY FAGAN
- ★ ALLEN FAGAN
- ★ TODD MESSERSCHMIDT
- ★ GEORGE RODE

Thank You Letters Accepted Here

In the aftermath of the May 8th forest fires, the Avalanche will be accepting thank you notes from fire victims and will publish them free of charge on our letters to the editor page.

Heartwarming To See How Community Joined Together

Dear Editor,

My sympathy goes out to those residents who lost their homes and property in the devastating fire which swept through the AuSable River Valley this last week. We should all be grateful that lives were not lost. It is extremely heartwarming to see how the community joined together to give its time, resources, and especially themselves during this crisis.

I have been spending much of my time in the Grayling area for the last 17 years. Needless to say, I feel as though I am a part of that community. The concern for preservation of nature and the environment and quality of life is shared by all. This is evident in how quickly the DNR, the American Red Cross, the National Guard, local businesses and concerned individuals reacted to relieve the suffering and property loss of their neighbors.

With so much of my time spent in Grayling, it's been hard to avoid the conflict between AMAC, the Anglers, the AuSable Conservation Trust and the National Guard. But when the chips were down, who came through? Of all these groups, the only organized effort I saw was the National Guard — housing and feeding evacuees and lending a hand wherever needed.</

Letters to the Editor

Homeowners Should Come Ahead of Governor's Inspection

Dear Sirs:
This is a letter in thanks to the DNR and the people who were directly involved in fighting the fire.

My wife's cottage and the homes of her relatives next to us were spared. It is clear that the fire fighters stopped the fire from reaching one of our homes, for which we are all very thankful, especially since five cottages and homes near us were not as fortunate. Even though there was a great loss of property, it is clear that the fire fighters saved many homes by their direct efforts.

Until we could get into the area to assess the damage it was a very stressful period. I would also like to say that all of the people that I came in contact with were very polite and sympathetic. This is particularly true of the State Police, Crawford County Sheriff's Deputies, and the DNR officers who manned the road blocks. I also found the public utility employees courteous and helpful.

After the fire had swept

through the area, property owners were kept out of the area much longer than was necessary. There were four reasons given at different times why the property owners were not allowed to enter the fire area: 1. Hot spots; 2. Downed power lines; 3. Looters in the area; and the worst one of all 4. The Governor had not inspected the area yet. During the height of the fire all people must be kept out of the fire area to facilitate the fighting of the fire and prevent confusion, but I do not believe that because the Governor is going to inspect the area he has more rights than the property owners whose property is directly involved. Allowing property owners access to their property would not have interfered with the Governor's flight over the area. Property owners gathered at the corner of Stephan Bridge Road and N. Down River Road were incensed at this one.

Once the immediate fire danger had passed, none of those reasons have any valid-

ity over the rights of the property owners to inspect and protect their property, especially those of permanent residents. The permanent residents should have been allowed in immediately even if there was some danger to themselves on showing proof of residency in the fire area, i.e. drivers license. Non-resident property owners should be allowed in on furnishing proof of ownership, i.e. copy of tax notice or a simple not on official stationary issued by the township or county treas-

urer stating that the person owns property in the fire area. By allowing property owners in, they could fight the hot spots themselves, stop looters, and direct linemen as needed.

I was allowed in some 16 hours after the fire had been brought under control and some 20 hours after the fire had passed by my home. There were still smoldering logs and stumps that I put out. I was able to save the phone and electric line men needless duplication of effort and time

by telling them our wires were OK and that our neighbor's wire was not. Several electric and phone linemen came to inspect the lines and were able to continue on without having to check further.

The biggest problem was with gawkers and sightseers. I can not believe the number of curiosity seekers who drove in just to see what had happened, including two different instances where people with trucks drove in and when they saw my wife or me they

left in a big hurry.

Road blocks are necessary, especially to keep out people who have no legitimate reason to be there, but the property owners, especially permanent residents, should have been allowed in as soon as the imminent danger had passed and it was daylight.

Thank you fire fighters on behalf of myself and my immediate neighbors. For those who were not so fortunate, my heartfelt sympathy.

John B. Pruchnicki

Flushing, MI



Let's Talk About It

By Joe Murphy

The tragic fire that struck our area on the eighth of May was the most costly in property in our county's history. But we can all be thankful that no lives were lost. The fact that the number one priority was evacuating folks from the endangered areas is highly commendable. Property can be replaced, human life can't. Perhaps more could have been saved but at the cost of human lives. My heart goes out to those that lost their homes. But I feel a great deal of pride of the way folks pitched in to help their neighbors in their time of need.

Fire departments from many surrounding towns were there to help. City Police Officer Dennis Long tells of while manning a road block a fire truck manned by two young ladies from Lewiston appeared through the heavy smoke. They asked him if there was a home near by. He replied that one that might have already burned was back in on a nearby road. They said they'd check and took off through the heavy smoke. He became worried when they didn't come back and went in to find them busy saving the home. There were many acts of heroism on that tragic day. We should say a big Thank You to everyone who worked so hard to contain that terrible fire.

The outpouring of aid for the fire's victims again proves that concern and love for others is alive and well in this area. Sometimes we tend to feel that neighbor helping neighbor is a thing of the past. Then in times of need the outpouring of Christian love people demonstrate proves us wrong. To everyone who stepped forward to offer help to the fire's victims another big Thank You for restoring my faith in human nature.

Another point I wish to make is while we expect the fire department, the D.N.R., and the National Guard to commit and endanger men and equipment in fighting fire, there were many private contractors who furnished men and equipment to the fire suppression efforts. Again I feel we owe them a big Thank You.

The local merchants were there to do all they could in supplying food both for the fire fighters and its victims. The school offered the victims a place of shelter. Again, Camp Grayling proved a good neighbor in opening buildings for the over flow from the school. The Red Cross was right on the job along with many others to serve the needs of those evacuated from the fire's path. I know there are many that gave aid that I may have failed to mention. A Big Thank You To All Who Helped In Any Way On That Tragic Day And Its Aftermath. I am very proud to be a part of this area and its caring people.

cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top."

"Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashed like bread, and mingled by drink with weeping." Ps 102:1-9.

Our compassion goes out to them who have suffered loss. We pray for them, to have the courage and the strength to endure the present. "Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil..." Neh 5:11.

And we also wish to impart to those who have lost so much, a hope for the future, by letting them know that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev 21:4.

Darlyn Townsend
Grayling

Let Us Help Now And Someday You Can Be On The Giving End

An Open Letter To The Fire Victims:

I am going to presume to speak for the rest of the community, although I have no right, but I want you to understand how most of us feel. From the moment we heard of the devastating fire on Tuesday, we have prayed for life and safety; we have agonized over how best to show our support when we realized what a true tragedy it was going to be for so many people.

By Wednesday everyone I know was either calling or showing up at the various relief agencies around town,

saying "How can I help? What can I do? What is needed?"

And the answers were neither simple nor certain, because we could only imagine your loss, not having gone through it ourselves.

What did know is how it feels to stand helplessly by while our friends and neighbors lose everything they have worked for all their lives. We had to do something, but what?

In most cases we have tried to find our own answers; money and household supplies, clothing and food came

pouring in; churches were mobilized to handle the influx. The Knights of Columbus opened their hall to rescue workers, Red Cross and Social Services; volunteers manned phones and helped with logistics. Businesses, stores, the hospital, the National Guard, and others all began in their various ways to try to minimize the damage. People from other communities throughout the state called — or came — or sent things, because they too, needed to do something.

Also, we know it's not easy to accept "charity" — we all take pride in our self-sufficiency, right? But it shouldn't be difficult to accept love, and such an outpouring of love and concern I have never seen before! Let us help you now, for our sakes, if not for your own.

Take the money, the furniture, the clothes, the food, etc., and rebuild your lives; someday, when you're stronger, some of us will need to loan on you, and we know you'll be there!

Phyllis Hamilton

DNR Thanks Community

Editor:

We wish to express our sincere gratitude for the way the public agencies and private sector pulled together on the recent wildfires in Crawford County.

It would be impossible to name all who provided heavy equipment, water tankers, food, etc. Township fire departments, county sheriff, state police, National Guard, and others joined forces with the Department of Natural Resources to form a coordinated evacuation/fire suppression team.

Similarly the townships, county, Red Cross, area schools, and churches and many private businesses and individuals rallied to assist the families who suffered the tragic loss of their homes. This effort continues.

To all who have joined in this total community effort Thank You.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

A Hope For The Future

Last week as I was tidying up before going to bed, I reflected on our evening drive. Usually our drives are so relaxing, and they help set the pace for the weekend to come.

We have spent many of them along the lakeshore, rolling along the countryside, and watching the sunset.

My boys had already gone to bed, and my husband was making his way to ours. We were all exhausted from the previous work week. I decided I couldn't sleep until I had some peace of mind. For you see this week, our drive took us along North Down River Road, Stephan Bridge Road, and Wakely Bridge Road.

I remember Tuesday vividly. The sun was shining and it had the promise of being a beautiful spring day, with just a taste of summer to come. I had high hopes for a renewing of my spirits. Things changed, as my oldest son woke up with a high fever and vomiting. Halfway through the morning I was hanging on the clothesline every blanket, afghan, sheet, pillow covers, and even the cushion cover from the couch. This is not what I had

planned to do with my day. I was thankful for the strong winds that dried my washing so quickly.

That same wind that I was so grateful for, was later to become a curse to others. That afternoon the wind took a small flame and turned it into an inferno. The sirens blared non-stop for hours. By late afternoon, I was realizing this was more than just an ordinary fire.

From my front porch, my

workroom, I watched as my

neighbors loaded up all the

children and friends and

headed out vehicle by vehicle,

to watch the fire. The smoke

was high into the sky now and

making its presence known to

many.

Evacuations of residents in the path of the fire were now intensifying. Roadblocks were set up to keep the curious from coming into the disaster area. Then there were the looters. You know the rest.

On Friday night, when all

the areas were clear, we too

went for a drive to see with

our own eyes, the horrors the

television screen had been

revealing. Our drive revealed

each other. I hope it will stay that way — just like Earth Day should be year round, not just for a day.

I would like to ask the DNR

officers in Lansing to stop

leasing the land to the oil

companies; the fire did too much

damage and we do not need

the oil companies to do any

more damage than they are

doing now to the environment.

Joe Stanek

Grayling

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doing now to the environment.

Joe Stanek

Grayling

Still Paying Price For Cutting White Pine

Dear Jon:

The tragic fire at Grayling reestablishes one of the laws of nature. When the balance of nature is upset or altered, a price must be paid.

The price for the cutting down of the Amazonian rain forests will be paid for by our children and grandchildren by a gradual warming of the earth and its attendant disasters.

The price paid for by Southern Californians who build their homes over and over again in the canyons and ar-

royos that are dried by the Santa Ana winds, or cirocco, is the destruction of those homes when the inevitable fires begin.

The price is still being paid for us for the massive cutting of the White Pine forests in Michigan. In your area, the immediate price was the siltation of the AuSable River and the loss of the Grayling trout. The successive price was the establishment of a Jack Pine forest that is genetically determined to burn periodi-

cally so that its pinecones can release their seeds. The immediate price is the loss of the homes of those who choose to build there.

My question is, unlike the

Californians who build in

the timber box canyons or on

the sides of mountains that

periodically have mud slides that

take homes down with them, have

we learned from this disaster

not to build in the same or

similar environment again?

Michael H. Johnson

Lansing, MI

People Make Tragedy Easier To Accept

Never in a million years did we think that the home we grew up in would be taken away from us. At such a difficult and devastating time in our life, so many people have meant so much and made this tragedy a little easier to accept. We would like to thank the Red Cross for all their assistance and caring, the churches for food, clothing and linen, and all the unmen-

tioned for your love, support and kindness. We know saying "Thank You" may not be enough, but everything you've done has meant so much and we appreciate it more than we can express. You've made our life a lot brighter with your help as we start to rebuild our life. Thanks to everyone who volunteered.

The Del Sheldon Family

Thanks To Firefighters

To all Firefighters and workers:

We extend to you our deepest gratitude and sincere thanks for your long hours of work and dedication during the fire of 1990! Thanks to those who suffered loss from the fire, our love and heartfelt sympathy. God Bless.

The Johnsons

Pine Road

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ON SITE INSPECTION--Governor James Blanchard and DNR director David Hales visited the burned area Wednesday afternoon. The governor said state aid would be made available to the victims of the fire.

Photo by Irene Pettyjohn

Property Damage Estimates Reach \$5.5 Million

By Irene Pettyjohn

Property damage estimates have reached the \$5.5 million mark as insurance companies continue to process claims from victims of the devastating forest fire that ripped through Crawford County on Tuesday, May 8.

George Stancil, vice president of the Cornell Agency, said preliminary estimates of losses insured by his agency alone have reached \$2 million and will go higher. He said two other Grayling independent insurance agencies, Sorenson and Grayling Insurance, have processed 26 more loss claims that total about \$650,000.

State Farm Insurance has approved in excess of \$600,000 in claims. Disaster supervisor for the agency, Bill Heemer, who has been working from a temporary office at the Grayling Holiday Inn, said they are still getting a trickle of claims, primarily for tree damage.

Herb Olson, agent for the Grayling Farm Bureau Insurance office, said his company has approved nearly \$200,000 in claims that varied from one total loss of a residence, destroyed recreational vehicles to smoke damage.

Total insured losses are estimated at \$5.5 million, but Stancil said a complete loss figure, insured and uninsured, is difficult to project because of the fluctuation of land values.

"It is not uncommon for us to process one million dollars in small claims during a year," said Stancil, "but \$2 million in one day puts a different color on things."

Stancil said, at last count, Cornell had processed claims for 31 total residential losses.

RELIEF EFFORTS CONTINUE

As fire victims file for insurance claims, community relief efforts continue to try to help with its citizen's losses.

Last Friday, Crawford County emergency management director Howard Taylor announced that the federal government had declared the county a disaster area, making fire victims eligible for a variety of services. He said a One Stop Assistance Center will be established at the Knights of Columbus Hall on Norway Street beginning Wednesday, May 30, and concluding at 4 p.m. on Friday, June 1. (See details in separate article in this week's issue.)

In addition to Taylor, representatives of the Ministerial Association will be present to accept applications from victims of the fire.

Rev. Robert Gordon, president of the Ministerial Assoc., said his organization is asking everyone who has a need as a result of the fire, regardless of the size, to make application with them so that they can assess the community's needs and begin processing the applications, according to need. Gordon said the Ministerial Assoc. is hoping to have all applications by July 1st.

"The Salvation Army, American Red Cross and Michigan Dept. of Social Services are limited to type and quantity of services they can give," said Rev. Gordon. "We are not."

He said the Ministerial Assoc. will be focusing their assistance on needs not covered by the other agencies.

The organization of local clergy has received more than \$47,000 in donations for fire victims. These donations range from \$110.85 given by the Grayling Middle School fifth grade students, earned by collecting pop bottles, to a \$10,000 donation from Shell Western.

"The goal of this organization is to use these funds to help the fire victims," said Father Derik Roy, treasurer for the group, "not to have \$30,000 sitting in the bank this time next year."

"The folks who had the least and lost the most are the people we need to help the first," said Rev. Gordon. "But every application will be considered, and we will be extending financial support as long as the money holds out."

Clothing outlets are beginning to close their operations as the need for clothing is diminishing.

Rev. Gordon said a truck from St. Vincent DePaul, of Detroit, came to St. John Lutheran Church last Friday and took the clothing items not needed by fire victims. Inmates from the Crawford County Jail helped load the bags of clothing on the truck.

St. John Lutheran Church's fellowship hall and sanctuary have been so full of clothing since the fire that Sunday worship services were held outside on May 13, and at St. Mary's Catholic Church on May 20.

Clothing and food items will be available at the St. Mary's Catholic Church Family Center for one more week, and then clothing needs will be handled through the St. Francis Thrift Shop. Father Roy said there will be no charge for fire victims. Clothing will be available through the Thrift Shop for three or four months, or until all the needs of the community have been met.

March 16th Brush Pile Burn Re-ignited To Start Forest Fire

Reprinted from May 24 issue

The May 8th forest fire started from a brush and dirt pile that had been burned seven and a half weeks earlier, according to DNR investigators.

No charges were sought against the owner of the brush pile, Gerald Fagan, 57, of Thendara Rd., because of the "incredibly bizarre set of circumstances" said Crawford County Prosecutor John Huss.

Fagan had burned the brush pile on March 16 with a DNR permit while there was one inch of snow on the ground. The brush pile had apparently burned out within the week and Fagan had checked the pile periodically after that and found no fire left.

Even though it snowed and rained after that date, some of the coals remained beneath the dirt and ashes and were re-ignited by the strong winds nearly seven weeks later on May 8th. DNR investigators believe the forest fire originated from this brush pile.

Here is the entire opinion issued by the Prosecuting Attorney:

The forest fire of May 8, 1990, which commenced at approximately 3:30 o'clock p.m. near Thendara Road in Grayling Township, Crawford County, Michigan and eventually involved over five thousand, four hundred acres of land, the destruction of eighty-one domiciles, one hundred, thirteen outbuildings and twenty-five motor vehicles, boats and all terrain vehicles was caused by an incredibly bizarre set of circumstances which are detailed as follows and leads me to conclude that there was no criminal violation of P.A. 1969, No. 329, being the Prevention And Suppression of Forest Fires Act as found at MCLA 320.21 et. seq.

On May 17, 1990, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division, presented my office with a report prepared by CO Bruce Patrick, requesting a warrant for Gerald Landon Fagan of Thendara Road, Grayling, Michigan, charging him with a violation of MCLA 320.25 (b) which provides "a person shall not... set fire, or cause, or procure the setting on fire of any flammable material on or adjacent to Forest Land without taking reasonable precautions, both before and after lighting the fire, and at all times thereafter to prevent escape thereof or leave the fire before it is extinguished."

The 21 page report establishes the following facts:

1. In early March, 1990, the suspect hired a commercial excavator to bulldoze stumps, trees and slash into four separate piles on his property located in a line and easterly of his home as a result of his efforts to clear his property.

2. The suspect sought and was granted a burning permit from the Department of Natural Resources on March 16, 1990, and burned both the first brush pile or the one nearest his home and the second brush pile on that day, there being approximately one inch of snow on the ground at that time.

3. It has been established that the suspect had no intention of burning the third and fourth brush piles, being further East of his home, and had evidenced this intention to neighbors stating that he was going to leave them there for rabbit and other small game cover.

4. That the first brush pile burned and then smoldered for approximately two weeks and the second brush pile immediately to the East burned itself out in two days to one week after being set afire.

5. Visual inspection of the land showed that bulldozer tracks were evident over the entire property and that other than several large oak trees, the property appeared to have been stripped of all brush and slash.

6. On April 16, 1990, the #1 brush pile, or the brush pile nearest the suspect's home, rekindled itself and the suspect sought and received from the Department of Natural Resources, a burning permit that day for a "flaming old brush pile" and states that after allowing it to burn down again, he proceeded to douse it with water.

7. The suspect states that he then checked the second brush pile to the East of the one which had re-kindled itself, and could find no sign of fire, smoke or heat in that pile going so far as to place his hands down inside the brush pile in an effort to determine if there was any indication of smoldering.

8. The suspect then continued to check this pile #2 periodically for any signs of fire, smoke or heat and finding none, continued to pick up his property and hand pile brush on the site of the second brush pile.

9. Interviews with neighbors indicate that there had been no burning on the subject property since the re-kindling incident of April 16, 1990, and that one neighbor was on the day of the fire at the back of his own property where he could plainly see the suspect's property and that immediately prior to 3:30 p.m., there was no one on that property nor was there any sign of smoke or fire. Shortly after 3:30 p.m. this same neighbor observed that two of the brush piles were burning and there was no sign of anyone in the vicinity.

10. That approximately 1:30 p.m., being approximately two hours prior to the start of the fire, a DNR plane had flown over the Thendara Road area and had not noticed any smoke or indication of fire at that time.

Doodles from the Tall Timber

by Wendall Hoover

Fire! The mere mention of the word can bring sheer terror into a person's heart and mind. Too many people in this area have had a taste of that terrible fright and the tearing anguish that goes with it. We can, and have, helped with money and a sympathetic ear, but the stilling terror cannot be quenched so easily.

Thank heaven we don't give up easily, that there is a resilience which makes many want to start over again, knowing full well that some things lost, will never be replaced. It is a good thing that our ancestors were resilient too, because wildfire has, along with its



UNDERGROUND FIRE--DNR investigators found charred wood that had smoldered underground since March 16.

11. Interviews with a University of Michigan Fishery Research Crew, neighbors and a Crawford AuSable School bus driver, indicate that with winds blowing out of the South West from fifteen to thirty miles an hour, the fire took less than ten minutes from the time that smoke and fire were spotted in the second brush pile until the flames reached the other brush piles and woods to the North and East of the suspect's property and was out of control.

12. The Department of Natural Resources Fire Investigation Team has determined that the second brush pile was the source of the fire and excavation of that pile revealed that in bulldozing the initial pile together, logs and stumps had been covered partially by sand and dirt. Excavation of those stumps from beneath the ground reveal that there were a number of pieces of charred wood which were extremely hot indicating that in fact the fire had smoldered under ground since March 16, 1990 in much the same way as charcoal is made without trace of flame, smoke or heat despite snow storms of one half inch or more on the 22nd, 25th, and 30th of March and again on several occasions in April. The extremely dry conditions and high winds of May 8, 1990 combined to cause this "charcoal-like" substance to either re-ignite or ignite combustible substances in the vicinity which was the cause of the eventual forest fire which then burned Northeasterly from that

spot.

I conclude that Gerald Fagan did take responsible precautions before and after lighting the fire on March 16, 1990 on or adjacent to Forest Land as evidenced by the placing of the brush piles in the middle of a field which had been cut over and bulldozed clear and his procurement of a burning permit even though there was snow on the ground at the time.

The only issue remaining is as to whether the suspect took reasonable precautions at all times thereafter to prevent escape of the fire. In that regard, I conclude that with a time lapse of seven to eight weeks since the permitted burning of the number 2 brush pile (the forest fire's point of origin) combined with the periodic checking of the same, Mr. Fagan had taken such reasonable precautions under the circumstances to leave a reasonable person with the expectation that no fire would occur much less escape from the number 2 brush pile on May 8, 1990.

Accordingly, I would decline the Department of Natural Resources' request for a criminal misdemeanor warrant. My decision would have no impact or effect on any civil liability which Mr. Fagan may have incurred as a result of his conduct between March 16th and May 8, 1990.

Date: May 17, 1990
John B. Huss
Prosecuting Attorney

